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Senate Bans Inhumane Export of Horses

The U.S. Senate has passed an amendment, introduced by Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), which is intended to stop the inhumane and unnecessary export of horses by sea for slaughter.

The amendment would prohibit export of horses by sea, but would authorize the secretaries of commerce and agriculture to establish regulations granting waivers for specific consignments of horses which are not intended for slaughter. The provision is supported by the American Horse Council and horse industry and humane organizations.

In late 1975, in response to extensive media coverage and increasing public protest over the inhumane treatment of horses shipped abroad for slaughter, the U.S. Department of Agriculture proposed a study of future voyages.

At that time, the American Horse Council strongly recommended that final authorization of funds for this study be delayed until such time as USDA's National Horse Industry Advisory Committee could review the proposal. The HIAC subsequently recommended "that horses not be exported by water for slaughter in other countries."

Sen. Williams, in following the advice of the HIAC and the AHC, said that while the USDA conducts routine inspections of the horses and conditions on board ship at loading, they do not have any way of controlling what happens to the horses once they leave the United States. The proposal to study future voyages would only lead to delay of any real solution to the problem, according to Williams.

He further contended, "The amendment before us is the only practicable means of preventing these inhumane shipments."

A similar amendment is being reviewed in mark-up proceedings of the export administration bill in the House Committee on International Relations. The House amendment was proposed by Representatives James Florio and Helen Meyner, both of New Jersey.

